

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. Hearing aid apparatus comprising:
a first signal path having a microphone for receiving sound in a vicinity of a user, a processor for processing the sound into a processed sound, and a speaker for outputting the processed sound into a vicinity of an ear canal of the user;

a second signal path for establishing communication between at least a portion of the first signal path and a location remote from the user; and

a switch for automatically selecting the first signal path or the second signal path in response to detected occurrence of a predetermined condition of the second signal path.

2. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first signal path is selected when the hearing aid apparatus is in a hearing aid state.

3. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second signal path is selected when the hearing aid apparatus is in a communications state with a remote communications device.

4. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said predetermined condition is a detected ring condition of a cell phone.

5. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined condition is the absence of a detected active signal in the second signal path for a predetermined period of time.

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6. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second signal path is a two-way communication path with a telephone network.

7. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a switch to manually select between the first signal path and the second signal path.

8. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a switch to place the apparatus into a sleep state, wherein power to at least some components is shutdown.

9. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a memory to store a first set of sound processing control parameters for the first signal path, and for storing a second set of sound processing control parameters, different from the first set, for the second signal path.

10. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the first set of sound processing control parameters are selected based on a hearing impairment of a user.

11. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the second set of sound processing control parameters are selected based on the quality of a transmitted signal.

12. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the second set of sound processing control parameters are selected based on the quality of a transmitted signal.

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13. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a switch for manually selecting the first signal path or the second signal path, such that when the second signal path is manually selected, the apparatus is automatically placed into a sleep state in response to the predetermined condition.

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14. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 1, comprising:
a switch for manually placing the apparatus into a sleep state.

15. Hearing aid apparatus according to claim 2, comprising:
a switch for selecting a communications mode wherein the hearing aid state is disabled, and the apparatus can be switched between a communications state and a sleep state.

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